



Every national crisis begins with a lie we choose to protect. Not the loud, reckless kind that collapses under scrutiny. A disciplined lie. Groomed, repeated, and dressed in numbers that look too clean to suspect. It sits comfortably in reports, hides behind spreadsheets, and passes through briefings without resistance. Until the day those numbers stop behaving like data and start testifying like witnesses. That is where we are now.

Under the Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo administration, with Joseph Boahen Aidoo at the helm of COCOBOD, the foundations of this story were laid. And while they were busy staging outrage under the current administration, choreographing farm visits, packaging optics, and selling a scandal for public consumption, the minority NPP left out the only line that matters. They built the mess, fed it, and now pretend to be shocked by what it has become.

Because once you follow the numbers coming out of COCOBOD, the mask slips. They do not shout. They do not defend themselves. They sit there, cold and aligned, daring you to ignore them. Read them properly, and they stop being statistics. They become evidence. A trail of decisions that refuses to stay buried.

Start with cocoa roads. Over the years, contracts totaling GH¢26.5 billion were awarded. On its own, that number can be defended. Infrastructure is expensive. Rural connectivity matters.

Roads support farmers. But then comes the second number: GH¢5.4 billion. That is all that has been paid. Which leaves a third number: GH¢21.6 billion. Unfunded. Unsettled. Hanging.

A gap of that size is not an accounting delay. It is a decision. It means commitments were made far beyond what the system could sustain at the time they were made. It reflects choices taken with future consequences deferred. And when you look closer, the pattern sharpens. Of the GH¢26.5 billion, about GH¢21.4 billion, roughly 81 percent, was committed within just three years between 2018 and 2021. That is not gradual development. That is acceleration.

In one year alone, 2019/2020, contracts worth over GH¢14.3 billion were awarded while barely GH¢110 million was paid. That is not pipeline expansion. That is exposure creation. It is a deliberate widening of obligations without a corresponding expansion of financing capacity. It is how pressure is built into a system quietly, without immediate consequence, but with inevitable impact.

Once you see that pattern, you begin to notice it everywhere. Look at the debt profile. Total obligations now sit at about GH¢16.18 billion, with GH¢6.48 billion due almost immediately and nearly GH¢9.7 billion following within a few years. That is not staggered debt. That is compressed pressure. It means the system is not being given time to breathe. It is being forced to absorb multiple financial shocks within a short window.

Then layer in cocoa bonds, about GH¢7.7 billion in obligations, with repayment peaks concentrated around 2026. Again, the same pattern emerges. Commit now. Pay later. Push the burden forward and allow it to accumulate until it becomes unavoidable. The structure is consistent. The logic is consistent.

But perhaps the most revealing numbers are not even in the billions. They are in sacks. Jute sacks. From 2021 to 2025, contracts were signed for 286,250 bales, yet only 91,858 bales were delivered. That leaves 194,392 bales outstanding. When you isolate the critical years, 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24, you find 206,250 bales sitting uncleared across three consecutive cycles. That is not delay. That is accumulation.

At current pricing, that represents roughly \$124 million tied up in contracts that have not been fulfilled. That is capital that has been committed but not converted into value. It sits in limbo, neither productive nor resolved, simply carried forward as part of an expanding obligation chain.

And yet, procurement continued. Even as cocoa production declined sharply, from over 1,047,000 tonnes in 2020/21 to about 482,000 tonnes in 2023/24, procurement remained steady and even rose again to 80,000 bales in 2024/25. This is where the disconnect becomes impossible to ignore.

Procurement is supposed to follow production. Contracts are supposed to follow funding. Debt is supposed to follow value. These are not abstract principles. They are the basic mechanics of any functioning system. Yet here, each appears to be moving independently. Production falls. Procurement rises. Funding gaps widen. Debt compresses. Obligations accumulate.

So the question becomes unavoidable. What exactly was driving these decisions? Because the pattern is too consistent to be random. It is not noise. It is structure. It is a system behaving in a way that reflects its internal incentives, not its external realities.

When systems begin to move independently of their own logic, they begin to fail. Not immediately, but structurally. The failure does not come as a single event. It builds quietly, layer by layer, decision by decision, commitment by commitment, until the weight becomes too great to carry.

This is a scandal. Not the polite kind you can shrink into one contract or pin on a single transaction. A full-blown scandal, stretched across years, buried in decisions that kept repeating themselves long after the consequences were obvious. No single smoking gun, because the entire system became the weapon. And it was fired, again and again, with precision.

A pattern of commitments that outpaced funding. A pattern of debt that was pushed forward rather than resolved. A pattern of procurement that did not adjust to reality. A pattern of contracts that were allowed to remain uncleared across years. A pattern that repeats itself across different parts of the system with the same underlying logic.

Individually, each can be defended. Together, they become indefensible. Because the numbers are not confused. They are disciplined. They line up too neatly, pointing in one direction with a stubborn clarity. And that kind of consistency is never accidental. It is engineered.

By: Kay Codjoe